DAWN

METRO South

KARACHI Sunday, January 25, 2026

KARACHI

Sunset	06:12 pm
Sunrise (Tomorrow)	07:15 am

NEXT 24 HRS

Minimum	12°C
Maximum	22°C
Humidity	28%
Outlook	Cloudy

Sinner survives, Djokovic sizzles as heat triggers Melbourne chaos

Pg.18 SPORT

Manslaughter case registered against 'unknown persons'

FIR registered on behalf of state terms Gul Plaza fire an outcome of negligence, carelessness

By Imtiaz Ali

KARACHI: Police on Saturday registered a manslaughter case over the devastating Gul Plaza inferno, terming the incident an "outcome of negligence and carelessness".

The deadly fire, which erupted on the night of Jan 17 at the plaza and took nearly two days to be fully extinguished, has left the ground-plus-three-storey building in ruins, with some sections collapsed. It has so far claimed 71 lives.

South DIG Syed Asad Raza confirmed that an FIR had been registered on behalf of the state against unknown persons under Sections 322 (manslaughter), 337-H(i) (punishment for hurt by rash or negligent act), 436 (mischief by fire or explosive substance with intent to destroy house, etc), and 427 (mischief causing damage to the amount of Rs50) of the Pakistan Penal Code.

The FIR lodged on the complaint of Nabi Bux SHO Nawaz Ali Zardari said the police received information about the fire in the plaza at around 10:30pm on Jan 17.

The complainant added that the fire "was rapidly spreading and engulfed" the entire plaza while firefighters and other rescue personnel were engaged in efforts to extinguish the blaze.

He further stated that the fire erupted in shop number 193, a flower and gift shop, located on the ground floor, and quickly spread through the shopping plaza.

"Rescue work is ongoing and there are apprehensions of more deaths," the SHO said in the FIR.

The police also blamed the "lack of firefighting equipment and the absence of reasonable arrangements" in the case of an emergency for the tragedy.

The complainant said there were "no emergency exits" and that electricity had been cut, complicating the evacuation of those inside the plaza.

"Due to these reasons, precious human lives were lost and substantive financial losses also occurred," he added.

Survivor recounts tale of escape from Gul Plaza blaze amid locked doors, darkness

The mall was among commercial buildings that failed to meet safety regulations in January 2024 fire audit

MUHAMMAD Imran, a crockery shop owner who survived the Jan 17 blaze, stands in front of the gutted building.—Reuters

KARACHI: Muhammad Imran did not take the fire seriously at first, thinking it was another small spark at Gul Plaza Shopping Mall that would be quickly extinguished by fellow shop owners.

But smoke seeped through ducts and blackened the air in seconds. The lights went out soon after and phone flashlights turned useless, people could no longer see their own hands, he said.

Imran, who has diabetes and has undergone heart surgery, managed only a few steps before nearly giving up. "It felt like doomsday. You couldn't see the person next to you."

Imran's escape from the inferno, along with more than a dozen others, was hampered by locked doors, poor ventilation and crowded corridors. When they eventually got out, the survivors watched Gul Plaza crumble as rescue efforts faced delays and poor resources.

A Nov 27, 2023 survey by the fire department, covering more than 40 commercial buildings in the area, cited inadequate firefighting equipment, blocked escape routes, faulty alarms, poor emergency lighting and a lack of fire safety training for occupants and staff.

A follow-up audit by the fire department in January 2024 placed Gul Plaza among buildings that failed to meet regulations, with inspectors marking key safety categories, including access to firefighting equipment, alarm systems and electrical wiring conditions, as "unsatisfactory".

Separately, documents describing inspections by Karachi's Urban Search and Rescue teams in late 2023 and early 2024 also showed Gul Plaza was among several markets and commercial buildings flagged for deficiencies in one or more fire safety categories.

'People were panicking'

"Young boys were crying. People were panicking," Imran said, when they were confronted by locked exits.

Others smashed doors and locks as they moved through the darkness, holding hands and forming human chains to avoid getting lost.

With no way down, they ran to the roof, where 70 people, including families and children, were trapped for nearly an hour, survivors said. The smoke was even worse there, funnelled upward by the building's design, making it impossible to see even the neighbouring buildings.

Then the wind changed.

A sudden gust pushed the smoke aside, revealing Rimpa Plaza next door. Young men crossed first, found a broken ladder and began ferrying people across one by one.

"I was the last to leave. I wanted to make sure everyone was safe," Imran said. An ambulance from the Edhi Foundation charity was waiting on the other side.

Watched it burn

Many survivors said the response by the fire brigade was delayed and inadequate. Imran and other shop owners said they had escaped from the building and watched Gul Plaza turn into a molten inferno as the first firefighters arrived.

Shopkeepers said the first tender soon ran out of water and left to refill — a charge the provincial government denied.

Survivors said many of the missing were shop employees and traders who tried to help others escape or went back inside looking for family members.

Abdul Ghaffar, a toy store employee who had worked in Gul Plaza for two decades, said one of his cousins was among those still unaccounted for after helping others flee.

His cousin's mobile phone voice message, in which he can be heard apologising to his family, was circulated widely on social media. "He was helping people escape. That's how he died," Ghaffar said.

Three other relatives remain missing, he said, with the family still waiting for identification through DNA testing.

Several shopkeepers said the losses have scarred the market's tightly knit community.

"All of this keeps replaying in front of my eyes. People we saw daily are no longer among us. God was kind to us our lives were saved but I still cannot understand what kind of fire this was," said Imran.—Reuters

KMC announces reconstruction of 418 roads across city

By Our Staff Reporter

KARACHI: The Karachi Metropolitan Corporation (KMC) on Saturday announced plans to rebuild and revamp 418 roads across the city at an estimated cost of Rs14 billion, in a major move aimed at improving urban infrastructure, traffic flow and road safety for millions of residents.

The decision follows the earlier approval of Rs5.5bn for the rehabilitation of 26 key arterial roads, which officials described as a sustained effort by the Sindh government and KMC to address Karachi's long-standing infrastructure challenges.

In the latest phase, additional streets and roads have been identified for reconstruction to enhance connectivity and commuter convenience across the metropolis.

The development was discussed at a high-level meeting held at the KMC head office under the chairmanship of Mayor Barrister Murtaza Wahab.

The meeting focused on expediting approvals, reviewing ongoing development schemes and finalising future infrastructure plans.

The officials informed the mayor that 418 roads had been selected for rehabilitation and that preparation of PC-I documents was currently underway to ensure timely execution of the projects.

Barrister Wahab said Karachi was witnessing unprecedented investment of billions of rupees in infrastructure rehabilitation.

He said that KMC was committed to ensuring performance-based governance and delivering tangible improvements in line with the Pakistan Peoples Party's manifesto.

He added that serious and sustained efforts were underway to resolve civic issues swiftly and provide improved facilities to citizens.

Mr Wahab emphasised that road rehabilitation remained a top priority due to its direct impact on daily mobility, economic activity and public safety.

Navy rescues ailing Sri Lankan national at sea

By Our Staff Reporter

KARACHI: In a swift humanitarian operation, Pakistan Navy ships Tabuk and Moawin successfully conducted medical evacuation (MEDEVAC) of a Sri Lankan national requiring urgent medical attention on an Indonesian-flagged ship, MV Grey Palm, on the high seas at 800 Nautical Miles (approximately 1500 KM) off Pakistan's coast on Saturday.

The operation was initiated following a formal request from the Sri Lankan Maritime Rescue Coordination Centre (MRCC) for the provision of medical assistance to a Sri Lankan national crew member in critical condition on board MV Grey Palm positioned 800 Nautical Miles (approximately 1500 Kilometres) from Pakistan's Coast.

Pakistan Navy dispatched its ships as a first responder and evacuated the sick crew member along with an attendant. Subsequently, the patient was immediately provided with the necessary treatment on board the PN ship.

The Sri Lankan authorities and the family of the individual have thanked Pakistan for the prompt response and support.

Mercury falls to 'season's lowest' as cold wave grips Karachi

PEOPLE enjoy steaming chicken corn soup at a roadside stall. —Fahim Siddiqi/ White Star

Below 8.5°C average minimum temperature in city, airport sees mercury drop to 6.2°C

By Our Staff Reporter

KARACHI: The ongoing cold wave intensified further in the metropolis on Saturday as the mercury dropped to 6.2 degrees Celsius — the lowest temperature in parts of the city since the onset of this winter season.

According to the Pakistan Meteorological Department, a further drop in temperature is expected.

The Met Office data showed that the lowest temperature in the city was recorded at Jinnah Terminal 6.2 degrees Celsius followed by Bin Qasim town 8.6 degrees Celsius, Gulistan-i-Johar 8.7 degrees Celsius, Sharea Faisal and Mauripur 9.5 degrees Celsius (each). City's average temperature was 8.5 degrees Celsius.

Humidity dropped to 54 per cent and 15pc in the morning and evening, respectively.

The maximum temperature recorded was 21.3 degrees Celsius.

According to the Met department's daily advisory, the ongoing cold wave is likely to persist over most parts of the province till the end of this month.

"Occasionally windy conditions with cold and dry weather are likely to prevail today (Sunday) with minimum temperature ranging from 7 to 9 degrees Celsius," the advisory says.

Humidity levels are likely to range from 40-50pc and 15-25pc in the morning and evening, respectively.

In the interior parts of Sindh, the lowest temperature was recorded in Mohenjo-Daro 1.5 degrees Celsius, Mithi 2 degrees Celsius, Padidan 2.5 degrees Celsius.

Astronomer stirs curiosity about genesis of life, birth of stars

Makes presentation at soft launching of SANG Centre for Vocational and Scientific Training

By Shazia Hasan

KARACHI: The citizens of Karachi were treated to an intriguing talk on the Orion Nebula, the moons of Jupiter and life elsewhere in the universe along with viewing of heavenly bodies in the sky through powerful telescopes provided by the Pakistan Science Club and Spaceacademy Society during the soft opening of the SANG Centre for Vocational and Scientific Training here on Saturday.

The talk and presentation by Dr Salman Hameed, professor of astronomy at Hampshire College, US, who has long been associated with science communication and is the founder of Kainaat Studios, that creates high quality astronomy content in Urdu, especially for Pakistani audiences, was based on two main questions — How were the sun and the earth created? And is there life other than us in the universe?

He reminded everyone that the sky has always remained above our heads and if anyone is curious about the heavens all that they have to do is look upwards.

"Earlier, we did not have the tools to explore the universe. Our view was restricted. Still, we theoretically understood that our sun came from a nebula or gas cloud. Of course, things changed when astronomy gave us optics," said Dr Hameed.

While explaining the creation of the sun, the professor of astronomy showed different images captured by the Hubble Space Telescope's three-dimensional and infrared capabilities to understand how stars are born. "The space of gases in the Orion constellation is the maternity home of stars," he demonstrated through the images. "The sun was created the same way as the stars," he added.

As for the second question about the probability of life elsewhere in the universe, he said that there was no evidence of it so far. "So how do we guess if there might be life elsewhere?" He asked. "The connection is to look at what material we are made of. Are we created of some rare material or are we created of common material found in the universe? If so, then life in the universe should be common," he said.

Discussing the makeup of asteroids, which happen to be leftover matter during the creation of plants, he said that following their careful analysis by scientists, there were substances such as sugars such as ribose and glucose found in them. Ribose is a component of Ribonucleic acid or RNA, a nucleic acid present in all living cells that has structural similarities to DNA. He said that the craters on the moon show that it has been hit by many asteroids but the moon has no life on it. "It is clear then that you need the right conditions for life such as water and energy."

Looking at the four largest moons — Lo,

Continued on Page 14

DR Salman Hameed points to the Orion constellation, which he refers to as the 'maternity home of the stars' in our galaxy.—Fahim Siddiqi / White Star